

## [The Life of Ovide Morin]

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(Maine)

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WRITER Robert Grady

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24

(The Life of Ovide Morin, French Canadian)

(As told by himself to Robert F. Grady)

Ovide: "This place has changed a lot since I came here from Saint Epiphane. They didn't used to have any lights, [water?], sewers, telephones, or anything like dat. (Mr. Morin [furnished?] approximate installation dates for these things in a previous interview). A feller asked me once if I ever seen one of those old wooden plows like they used on the sidewalks once. It was made like dis: (he illustrated with his hands) and a man sat on top of it to hold it down. It was pulled by a horse. I told 'im I saw dat.

"I remember when my fader was [leavin'?] home to come here, he had a big dog. An' believe me, mister man, if you come around dat house at night or when nobody was home, you better look out! My fader says, 'I can't take dat dog wit' me,' so he gives him to a feller that lives about five miles away. He put 'im in a big bag, an' cut a hole so just his nose would stick through. Dat feller kept dat dog in the cellar for three days, but when he let him outdoors he came back to our house. When my fader was leavin' dat dog jumped up and scratched on my fader's chest. It was just like he was sayin', 'take me wit' you.' I felt bad when we drove away to see him settin' at the door. I often wondered what became of dat animal.

"Someting I can't do is kill an animal. We had a dog here once that got sick. I don't know what was the matter wit' him, but when we saw dat he wouldn't live my wife says, 'You better drown dat dog.' The river is right behind our house, but I couldn't do it, no sir! I gave \$5.00 to Fred Nichols ([humane?] agent) an' he took him away. We had some kittens here dat my wife wanted me to drown, but I couldn't do dat. Some one must have done it, because I didn't see them after a few days. We used to have about a hundred chickens here, and sometimes my wife would ask me to go out and kill a couple for dinner. (Mrs. Morin is not as bloodthirsty as all this would indicate). I used to do it, but it always made me sick afterwards.

25

"There's been something the matter with my throat lately, I cough, but there doesn't seem to be [anything?] there. I've been right in the house all winter. I never go over to town because I don't like to spit on the street. I'll be glad when the warm weather comes so I can get out an' do a little work around the house. I've been to all the doctors over here (in Old Town: none on French Island). They give me some medicine, but it don't do any good. It's funny - I go to bed at night an' it don't bother me at all, but when I get up I start to cough. When the warm weather comes I'm going to Bangor to see a doctor there.

"You know what's killin' this country, mister man? It's the automobiles. Yes sir. When I came here there was lots of saw mills: everybody was working. They didn't get much money, but they got a living. If a man had three pairs of horses on his farm he had to hire a man to drive each pair. Dat was three men. Now he gets a tractor an' one man can do as much work as the three. It's the same in the mills. My wife used to work in a cot on mill in Waterville. She run four looms: now they run thirty.

"It cost more to live now. We used to have wooden tables that we made ourselves. You couldn't use them now because you have to have the same as everybody else. We used to have a good table in the kitchen, here, but my wife wanted something better an' we got that. That set cost \$65.00. (a table and four chairs) We can make it bigger than that, but it's all right unless we have company. Every month now a woman has to spend \$5.00 on her hair. That was more than they used to spend in a lifetime. Up in Quebec the men never used to cut their hair. It used to grow long on their neck, and if their mustache got too long, they used to give it another twist. (He illustrated how that was done.)

26

"There was never any superstitions around Old Town. I never heard of any, anyway. Maybe if you ask some of the old men over there they can remember seeing some. That makes me think of someting, though. When O. G's wife (he calls his oldest boy O. G.) was sick they took her to the hospital in Bangor. She got pretty bad, an' they thought she wouldn't live. I was sittin' right in this chair one night, an' my wife was down at the hospital. Nobody was home but me and Blanche. (his daughter) All at once I heard a rap just like dat (he rapped with his knuckles three times on the wall) outside at that door. I went out on the porch, but nobody was there! By an' by I heard that rap again an' I says to Blanche, 'You look on the other side of the house an' I'll look out here. There's somebody around here, somewhere.' She looked out one door an' I looked out the other, but nobody was there! I says to her, 'Blanche, you wait an' see: dat girl is dead.' Mister man, half an hour later my wife called up on the telephone an' told us that O. G.'s wife was dead!

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"I knew what was goin' to happen because I heard those raps before. Our baby was sick an' my wife was out here holdin' it [in?] her arms and rockin' it, an' the baby was cryin'. That child was pretty sick. I was sittin' in that next room, an' I heard those three raps. They weren't outside, an' they weren't on anything. I just heard them. I didn't tel anybody, but I says to myself, 'dat baby will die.' Mister man, the next day dat baby was dead! Yes sir, there's someting there. We can't explain it, but we know it's there.